

A Survey of Government-supported Graduates' Professional Development: A Case Study of Heyuan Polytechnic

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Abstract

The paper surveys the professional growth of the primary English education graduates in Heyuan Polytechnic from the aspects of routine teaching, teacher competition and team learning by means of questionnaire method. The results show that: the five-year government-supported graduates have a low awareness of writing teaching plans and a low frequency of reflection; have a sense of professional development, but are not highly motivated to participate in teaching competitions; have less understanding of master teacher team learning. Aiming at the problems and deficiencies faced in their professional development, the paper focuses on student themselves, puts forward suggestions in three aspects, and hopes to take this opportunity to provide some referable suggestions for their teaching development.

Keywords

Primary English Government-supported Students; Professional Growth; Teacher's Professional Development.

1. Introduction

High-quality rural teachers are the foundation of the revitalization of rural education. Since the implementation of government-funded normal student policy, China has achieved remarkable results in building the basic education teaching body, which has undoubtedly expanded the teaching staff and improved the quality of teachers. To implement this policy, Heyuan Municipal Government has entrusted Heyuan Polytechnic with the task of cultivating government-funded students major in primary English education since 2014. As of 2023, seven classes of government-supported students had graduated, injecting a steady stream of new-found strength into rural primary English education in Heyuan. So, to further improve the personnel training quality of government-supported primary English education students, it is particularly necessary to investigate their current situation of professional growth.

2. Policy Background

To further improve the teacher strength of rural elementary school, China has introduced a series of policies. Measures for the implementation of publicly-funded education for normal school students directly under the Ministry of Education (for trial implementation), formulated by the Ministry of Education in China in July 2007, decided to put into effect the system of publicly-funded education for normal students on a pilot basis in six normal universities directly under the Ministry of Education^[1]. In July 2018, the Ministry of Education gave a revised course of the policy and then released it around the country. This Implementation Measures established a publicly-funded education system for normal students, selecting

outstanding high school graduates who are passionate about education and suitable for teaching to join the publicly-funded teacher educators, which is committed to cultivating more preeminent teachers and encouraging more outstanding young people to engage in education for a long period of time and for life^[2].

In an effort to strengthen the construction of rural teachers in Heyuan and improve the level of teachers in rural elementary school, in 2014, Heyuan municipal government released the "Reform Program for the Training Mechanism of Rural Primary School Teachers in Heyuan", which adopts the cultivating mode of government funding and directed assignment to rural primary school in Heyuan after graduation, to attract splendid fresh graduates from junior high schools to enroll in the five-year system of normal junior college^[3].

Heyuan Polytechnic, the implementer of the policy, i.e. the training platform for the five-year government-supported students, has educated five classes of graduates to rural elementary school in Heyuan with its rich experience in education and teaching. It has brought emerging strength into the rural elementary school teacher team in Heyuan.

3. Research Method

3.1. Questionnaire Method

All the data of this study were obtained by using questionnaires according to the purpose and object of the survey. It aimed at finding out the professional development of government-supported students major in primary English education in Heyuan Polytechnic. The questionnaire contained three categories, namely regular teaching, participation in the teacher competition and master teacher group learning. The number of questions in each section ranges from 4 to 5.

To be more specific, regular teaching was to find how they design teaching plan, whether they insist on writing teaching reflection and diaries; besides, to investigate more about their professional progress, teacher competition and master teacher group learning was added, which research the frequency of participation in the teaching competition and master teacher group learning, school teaching and re-search activities, etc.

3.2. Participants

The participants in our survey were the government-supported graduates major in primary English education in Heyuan Polytechnic who referred to the primary school English teachers worked in the counties' rural primary school in Heyuan. This study mainly investigated their professional development status, hoping to find out their current professional development dilemmas, analyze the crux of the difficulty, and put forward corresponding countermeasures.

4. Results and analysis

4.1. Questionnaire Distribution and Recovery

The questionnaire was released on the "questionnaire star" platform. With the support and help of the head teacher and counselor of Heyuan Polytechnic, the questionnaire link was forwarded through WeChat class group, and the students filled in it voluntarily. After two weeks' collection, a total of 70 government-supported students participated in our survey, up to 100 percent effective.

4.2. Results

4.2.1. Regular Teaching

As shown in Table 1 and Table 2, most of the government-supported students were fresh teachers with a teaching age of no more than 5 years. And 91.43% of them taught English after

graduation, telling that what they learned was very well matched with what they taught, which clearly showed that the government-supported students major in primary English education did fill the gap for elementary English teachers in rural schools in Heyuan and Huizhou.

Table 1. Investigation on the teaching age of primary English government-supported students

Options	Number	Percent
Under 3 years	29	41.43%
3-5 years	17	24.29%
More than 5 years	24	34.29%

Table 2. Investigation on the teaching subjects of primary English government-funded students

Options	Number	Percent
Chinese/Math	6	8.57%
English	64	91.43%
Other disciplines	0	0%

In terms of writing teaching design (Table 3), 67.14% of them were aware of writing teaching plans, but they would not revise them anymore; only 22.86% students could often write teaching designs and constantly modify and improve according to teaching arrangement, different students and learning situation. What's worse, 10% of the government-funded students did not write lesson plans, which indicated that commissioned students had a weak awareness of writing teaching plans. Combined with further analysis (Table 4), the option of "basically do not write the teaching plan" and "write a teaching plan rarely modified" commissioned students were easy to have the idea of "let nature take its course" when facing teaching problems.

Table 3. Investigation on the frequency of writing teaching plan

Options	Number	Percent
Write frequently and revise constantly	16	22.86%
Write but rarely revise	47	67.14%
Basically do not write	7	10%

Table 4. Contrast on the frequency of writing teaching plan and teaching problems-solving

	Discuss with colleagues	Study on one's own	Ask colleagues for help	Let it be delayed
Write and often revise	100%	68.75%	68.75%	0.00%
Write but rarely revise	85.11%	72.34%	76.60%	6.38%
Basically do not write	100%	71.43%	71.43%	14.29%

Teaching reflection focuses on classroom teaching, and frequent reflection on the success or failure of teaching can foster teachers to grow steadily^[4]. In the survey of the frequency of writing teaching reflection (Table 5), it was known that the situation of government-supported students' writing reflection was not promising, only 18.57% of them could persist on writing reflection every day, and more than 80% of them had a random attitude towards teaching

thoughts and feelings, which showed that they had not understood the importance of writing teaching reflection. Combined with the reflection content (Table 6), most commissioned students paid more attention to the success or failure of teaching, teaching objectives and students' reactions, but rarely thought about whether the design of teaching content can train students' English thinking.

Table 5. Investigation on the frequency of writing teaching reflection

Options	Number	Percent
Write almost every day	13	18.57%
Write occasionally	48	68.57%
Basically do not write	9	12.86%

Table 6. Investigation on the content of the teaching reflection

Options	Number	Percent
How students respond in the class	62	88.57%
Whether teaching objectives achieve	62	88.57%
Where you fail in class	57	81.43%
Where you do well in the class	36	51.43%
How you train students' thinking ability	28	40%

4.2.2. Teacher Competition

Teaching skills competition is an effective way to promote teachers' professional rapid growth. On the collected data of participation in the teaching skills competition (Table 7), We observed that 87.14% of commissioned students did participate in the teachers' competition, in which they have a good effect. Based on the comprehensive analysis (Table 8), all the students knew competition for their professional growth helped a lot, but there are still 32.86% of them with the point of view "com-petition is not matter, education mainly depends on their own", which reflected they were intended to sign up for the teaching competition, but the enthusiasm was not so high.

Table 7. Investigation on the frequency of the participation in teaching skills competition

Options	Number	Percent
Attend constantly, with a good effect	19	27.14%
Attend occasionally, with a general effect	42	60%
Basically do not participate in these activities	9	12.86%

Table 8. Investigation on the effect of teaching competitions on individuals

Options	Number	Percent
Learn a lot	46	65.71%
Have a general effect	23	32.86%
Have no help	1	1.43%

According to the survey on the teaching and research activities that the primary school regularly organized, presented in Table 9, the regular teaching and research activities and the symposium on the exchange of experienced teachers are thought to be the more beneficial ones. This suggested that government-supported students hoped to learn more from the skilled teachers and absorb teaching experience and classroom management techniques; the special lesson-speaking activities, on the other hand, are less frequently mentioned, indicating that the

school may not often carry out this kind of activity and that teachers were not highly motivated to take part in it.

Table 9. Investigation on the school teaching and researching activity with tremendous help

Options	Number	Percent
Collective preparation of instruction	33	47.14%
Regular teaching and research activities	57	81.43%
Symposium on exchange of experienced teachers	42	60%
Pair Help	23	32.86%
Special lesson-speaking activities	15	21.43%

In response to the question, “Which way best promotes your professional growth?” more than half of the government-supported students stated that going out to observe and assess remarkable lessons was their top choice to advance their professional teaching. This proved that they had a sense of professional growth, and were driven to learn from both outstanding teachers and excellent examples. Second, despite 32.86% of the participants believed that self-reflection and teaching practice in the classroom were crucial for professional development, Table 5's reflection frequency revealed that they did not write reflections on a regular basis, implying that while they were fully aware of the need for reflections, they had not taken any concrete steps to put it into practice.

Table 10. Statistics of the best ways to promote professional growth

Options	Number	Percent
Observe, listen to, and evaluate lesson examples	37	52.86%
Theoretical study and special lectures	5	7.14%
Classroom practice and self-reflection	23	32.86%
Teaching basic skills competition	5	7.14%

4.2.3. Master Teacher Group Learning

When asked “whether you have joined the Master Teachers' Group”, nearly 90% of the government-supported students indicated that they had not joined the Master Teachers' Group, showing that they did not know much about it, had few contacts with it, and had limited channels for professional growth.

Table 11. The number of primary English education students to join master teacher group

Options	Number	Percent
Yes	4	5.71%
No	62	88.57%
Be willing to join	4	5.71%

Then, we surveyed merely 5.71% of the participants who joined the master teacher's studio. What was discovered during these surveys was that the majority of the students joined the studio with the intention of strengthening their research and teaching skills, exchanging and updating their educational concepts, and raising the bar for education and teaching research. Following their enrollment in the master teacher's studio, government-sponsored students' personal growth has been examined further. It turned out that these students' participation in the master teacher's studio's diverse teaching and research activities had significantly enhanced their capacity to conduct subject research.

Table 12. Investigation on the reason for joining the Master Teachers' Group

Reasons	Number	Percent
Improve teaching and research ability	3	75%
Exchange and update the educational concept	3	75%
Improve the level of personal teaching and research	3	75%
Admire the leader	1	25%
Help with promotion and professional title evaluation	2	50%
Other reasons	2	50%

Table 13. Investigation on the personal improvement after joining the famous teacher studio

Options	Number	Percent
Subject study	3	75%
Education and teaching	2	50%
Communication and collaboration	3	75%
Students' instruction	2	50%
Autonomic learning	0	0%

5. Suggestions

The results of the survey indicate that the profession of English education for five-year government-supported graduates grows gradually with teaching experience. However, the level of professional development needs to be continuously improved, so the author will combine the survey results with pertinent literature to put forward targeted professional development suggestions.

5.1. Insist on Teaching Reflection to Promote the Sustainable Professional Development

Teaching reflection is a beneficial thinking activity and a way of re-learning^[5], which is a teacher's recognition of the past teaching experience. To reflect on teaching needs teachers to review what they did in the class, but it is not the same as reviewing^[6]. It can be seen from the questionnaire that most of the five-year government-sponsored graduates did not form the habit of writing reflection or teaching logs, and only a few teachers persisted on that. As an emerging force of the teaching staff in Heyuan, government-funded students are supposed to have the consciousness of teaching reflection, reflect in practice to improve English teaching skills, and try to reflect on every class.

How to reflect on your lessons? Scholar Wangtao proposed, "Teaching Reflection should be the 'thinking' of certain parts in your class. In classroom teaching, there will always be some unforgettable teaching fragments that you gain or lose^[6]." During internship, we were oftentimes told, "Teaching reflection is a way for a new teacher to grow and progress rapidly." A wonderful teaching clip leaves teachers a profound feeling and permanent enlightenment. It is linked to every facet of class-room teaching, including drawing students in with the start of a new session, designing a perfect and helpful blackboard-writing, utilizing teaching aids, creating a distinctive teaching assessment, and so forth. Even with the best-laid plans, there will always be some things left out. For this reason, teachers must go over the entire teaching process and consider things like logical flow, reasonable content, appropriate group collaboration arrangements, relevant classroom questions, and even more. Through introspection on both the successes and failures of classes, teachers may rectify teaching attitudes, refine the ways they teach, and foster the long-term growth of their competencies.

Books provide systematic, broad knowledge that is only fully understandable with personal teaching. It is easier said than done to listen to the class, discuss about it, and offer suggestions. Take the educational training experience in my class as an example. We studied in Heyuan second primary school and Heyuan third primary schools for about one month. And it was acknowledged that every one of us valued this hands-on instruction; although it's a challenging process, new knowledge was gained every day. In the daily reflections on listening to the lessons, it's obvious to see that "the first-line primary school teachers earnestly practiced the new curriculum standards, emphasized 'context' teaching, and assigned innovative homework per day." "It's conducive to integrate teaching contexts with learning situation, and unfolded the logic chain teaching." "Reflection is for improvement and preparation for the next practice." During that period, I learned how to read in thinking, which is promoted by our adviser Miss Song. Simply speaking, in practice part of lesson, there was an activity "listen and imitate". Before playing the accurate audio of the text, the teacher firstly let the students read freely, no matter right or wrong. Through this activity, students primarily thought about how to read instead of wholly imitating, which to some extent practiced students' ways of thinking. Besides, we often reunited together to evaluate classes we heard in which each of us raised opinions and suggestions freely. In order to help us get started more quickly, the instructors guided us to restore the teaching design, simulate and demonstrate. After a few weeks, we obviously found that there was no tension in the real teaching, but how to let students follow teacher.

5.2. Keep Learning and Continuously Update the Educational Concept

"New Curriculum Standard" (2022) defined the orientation of English education and put forward the "core competence", namely language ability, cultural consciousness, thinking quality and learning ability^[5], which also expressed higher requirements for the professional skills of primary English teachers.

Upon further acquaintance with government-supported students, we found that most teachers around them are the ones with high teaching age and rich education experiences who had formed their own unique class style. They followed their own way to teach. You may feel rust-out from them. The reason for this phenomenon was that they lacked the awareness of lifelong learning, step by step.

Although most of the primary English teachers in school days had learned pedagogy, psychology and other related knowledge. However, as teaching ages rise, what they learned in school was progressively lost and not applied as frequently. This was because instructors educated pupils in addition to themselves, and as time passed, learning became a burden rather than a job.

Teaching profession is in an exceptional and difficult field where teachers must not only possess a strong foundation in academics but also consistently expand various kinds of knowledge, update educational conceptions through lifelong learning, and foster professional development. Nowadays, the Internet is developed in a rapid speed. Teachers can aim to set aside one or two pieces of education literature to read and study during leisure time each day in order to absorb the good teaching gains of others. They can also refresh their educational conceptions by reading journals and monographs on primary English education.

5.3. Expand the Channels for Professional Growth and Build a Learning Community

Action Plan for Revitalizing Teacher Education (2018-2022) proposed to innovate the teacher education model, train more excellent teachers, and cultivate better people with excellent people^[7]. According to the questionnaire, most of the government-funded students believed that attending outstanding courses was the best way to advance their professional development. However, they didn't have a deep understanding of how famous teachers

facilitate team learning, and so their opportunities for professional development are somewhat limited. Therefore, in this section, we will discuss how to broaden professional growth methods. In the first place, join the county's Teacher Development Center. Individual teachers who participate in collective education activities generally need to complete common educational tasks, observe certain discipline in the group and to some extent, restrain their own behaviors. Through group learning and the demonstration of excellent members, the internal motivation of the five-year commissioned students can be stimulated, which convert passiveness into activeness, and their professional skills can be greatly improved.

In the second place, learn from remarkable peers around you. The power of model never goes away. The five-year government-supported students can learn excellent teaching techniques and classroom management skills not only from the same subject teachers but also from other subject teachers, like sports, music, and so forth, which allows them to form a set of their own unique teaching style.

Finally, participate in the master teacher group learning. "Famous teachers' studio" serves as a distribution center for teaching ideas, an exchange center for teaching methods, and a trial field for teaching research and reform^[8]. As a platform for teachers' professional development, teachers may fully utilize a variety of learning intermediaries to boost their research ability. From the survey, the five-year government-supported students who joined the famous teacher studio had significantly improved in subject research, education and teaching, communication and cooperation, which promotes the in-depth development of professional communication and steady advancement of professional level.

6. Conclusion

Teachers are an important force to promote the realization of the overall goal of a strong education country, and as a special training group, the professional growth of government-supported students plays a key role in pushing the progress of basic education. After graduation, Heyuan five-year government-funded students must return to their hometown, i.e., village primary schools and township primary schools, to teach. Therefore, we hope that this article will help them to further recognize the importance of professional development and provide them with some paths for teachers' professional growth. May they ride on the spring breeze, embark on the path of nurturing rural primary education, persevere in learning, constantly improve themselves, and explore a path of professional development that is suitable for them.

However, this paper only takes the five-year government-sponsored students majoring in primary English education as the research object, the research sample is small, and does not take into account the differences in the professional development of the ones of different majors in the same region, so the current problems of the primary English commissioned students proposed in this paper need to be further observed, and the suggestions remain to be constantly examined in the future practice, and be further optimized and perfected in the future work.

Acknowledgments

Fund Project: The 2020 Research Project of the "13th Five-Year Plan" of Guang-dong Provincial Education Science, "Research on the Preservice and Post Service Training System of Government-sponsored Normal College Students under the Perspective of OBE -- Taking Heyuan Polytechnic as an Example" (Project approval No. 2020GXJK548) and The 2020 General Project of Humanities and Social Sciences Research of the Ministry of Education, "Collaborative Mechanism and Strategy Research on Targeted Training of Rural Teachers in the Context of Rural Revitalization" (Project approval No.20VJA880036).

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